

A  
SERMON

Preach'd before the  
King and Queen,

IN

Their MAJESTIES Chappel at  
St. James's, on the Twentieth Sunday  
after Pentecost, Octob. 25. 1685.

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By the Reverend Father

J O H N P E R S A L L,

Of the Society of Jesus, Professor of Divinity.

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L O N D O N,

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S E R M O N

King and Queen

Preached at the Chapel of  
St. James's Palace, on  
the 22d of May, 1687.

JOHN P E R S A L L

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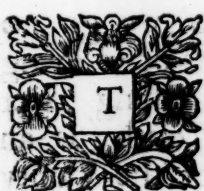
THEIR MAJESTIES,

On the Twentieth *Sunday* after *Pentecost*,  
*Octob. 25. 1685.*

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Erat quidam Regulus, cujus filius infirmabatur. *Joannis c. 4. v. 48.*

*There was a certain Nobleman, whose son was sick.*



THE Holy Church, in this Days Gospel, invites us all to the Bed-side of a Rich, Noble, Young, but Dying Prince, who lies groaning at Deaths-door, and notwithstanding

ing his Plenty of other things, is become a Beggar for a little Breath, which all the Power of the World is not able to afford him. I wish, that the Followers of Sensuality, who make Pleasure their God, live as if they were never to die, imagine Time to stand, and laugh at Discourses of another World, as Fables only for the Entertainment and Pastime of this: I wish (I say) they would turn their Thoughts hither a little while, and behold the dismal Theatre, whereon every one of them must one day infallibly act the same Part, which now this Noble Youth represents before them; trembling betwixt two great Eternities, of Happiness above, and Misery below, and uncertain which of the two is to be their Lot. Now, tho' we go no further, certainly the Pangs of a dying Prince, and Death triumphing over Wealth, Nobility, and Youth, is an Emblem, clear enough, of the Vanity and Uncertainty of Worldly Happiness,



ness, and might well deserve to be the Subject of our present Consideration.

But because I hear the Great St. *Augustin* (*speaking of our Saviour's restoring the Widows Son to Life*) advise

Serm. 44. de  
Verbis Do-  
mini.

us, That it was our LORD's Intention, that, by what he acted visibly towards the Body, we should understand his invisible Operations on the Soul, applying all his exterior and Corporal Performances, to an interior and Spiritual Sense: *Dominus noster JESUS CHRISTUS ea, quæ faciebat corporaliter, spiritualiter volebat intelligi.* It shall therefore be my present Endeavour, First, by the Sicknes of this Youth, to lay before your Eyes the Sicknes of a Soul in Sin; and, Secondly, from the Circumstances of his Cure, we'll gather the Means for the Curing of our Souls.

But because I am too conscious of my own Weakness, to hope for any Fruit from my Words, unless the Holy Ghost vouchsafe to put them in my Mouth, and speak them again to the

2270

Hearts

Hearts of my Hearers, I must have recourse to the *Blessed Virgin*, whose powerful Intercession is an Aqueduct or Channel (as the devout *St. Bernard* assures us) through which Celestial Gifts are conveyed unto us. Wherefore let us humbly invoke the same, saluting her with the Angel, *Ave Maria, &c.*

*Erat quidam Regulus, &c.*

**I**T being then my intent by the visible Sicknes of the Body to discover the invisible Sicknes of the Soul, let us enter a little into the Chamber of this Dying Prince, which probably you will find adorn'd with the richest Tapestry, beautify'd with choice Cabinets, and set out with other Moveables of the highest Price: The Curtains, Vallence, and Canopy of the Bed, all proportionable to the Nobility and Greatness of their Master; but approach a little towards that stately Bed, draw open

open those Royal Curtains, and see what lies within: A gasping Life, an half-living Death, a breathing Carcass! His sinking Eyes already seek their Grave: his pale and wan Countenance puts us in mind of his Winding-sheet: the feeble and unactive Condition of his Body declares, that he is Death's Close Prisoner: the Panting of his Heart is a sad warning, that the fatal Stroke is ready to be given, which must break asunder the Gordian Tye betwixt Soul and Body. And is this He, on whom so much Gallantry do's attend? Is it to him, those Hangings, Cabinets, and Embroider'd Curtains do belong? This certainly is the Fable inverted, and not a Pearl on a Dunghil, but a Dunghil in the midst of Pearls.

These were the visible Effects and Consequences of this Prince's Corporal Sicknefs: Let us now try, how far they will lead us towards the Discovery of the invisible Effects of a Spiritual Disease.

case. If you view the Chamber or Bed, wherein a dying Soul lies gasping, what for the most part more glorious ? It is one perhaps of these trimm'd-up Beauties of the World, which seem to out-shine the Suns brightest Beams. Gold, Silver, Pearls, and whatsoever the blind World calls Precious, is all too little to set them out. But turn hither the Eyes of your Understanding, draw open those gay Curtains by a serious Consideration, and look on that Soul, which lies within them. *O quale Monstrum ! What a Monster !* Had we Eyes of Angels, it would appear far more hideous to us, than the expiring Carcass, which we just now beheld. The Poyson of his Disease had dry'd and wither'd up his Body, consum'd all his Spirits, and the Soul being now ready to depart, all the Train of Beauteous Features had already taken their leave. But the Poyson of Sin is yet far ranker, and its Effects upon a poor infected Soul far

more

more deplorable. It consumes to nothing all her Substance, all the Stock of Grace whereby she flourisheth. The Sun of Justice, her only Life, is ready to withdraw his Divine Rays, and consequently all the Flowers of Vertue must needs dry up and wither; so that she, who before had Beauty enough to enamour the very Fountain of Beauty, is now become the Source of a Poyson, rank enough to infect the whole World. She is a meer Sink of Loathsomness and Corruption. What is she else, but a putrifying Carcass, feeding the Worms of a bad Conscience, and engendring innumerable venomous Insects, I mean, the cursed Brood of vicious Habits? She breaths forth such a Stench, that were our Corporeal Senses capable of being wrought on by Spiritual Objects, it would not be possible for us, to live within the Sphere of its Activity. For the truth of all this, I appeal to those Saints, to whom Almighty God has given a more pecu-

liar Light, for the discovering the Hor-  
 rour and Ugliness of Sin. St. *Cryso-*  
*stom* calls Sin the only Evil, asserting,  
*That we ought to abhor nothing but Sin,*  
*no not even Hell it self.* And the Rea-  
 son hereof will appear clearly, if we  
 consider the Nature of an Humane  
 Soul. She is created to the perfect  
 Image of her Creator, and participates  
 in an high Degree of his Divine Es-  
 sence, *Divinae Particula Auræ* : Hence  
 she has in her a strong and forcible  
 Appetite of being united to her God,  
 and consequently cannot be at rest,  
 whilst she is separated from him; but  
 in this Night of Sin, the Fogs, arising  
 from a corrupted Will, do so obscure  
 the Understanding, that, tho' the Soul  
 perceives an unquiet Appetite within  
 her self of some great Good, yet what  
 that Good is, or where to find it, she  
 knows not, and falls on that which  
 comes next, Sensual Pleasures, Riches,  
 Honours, mistaking the Rivulets for  
 the Fountains, but still ends with a  
 Rest-

Restlessness and Dissatisfaction. So *Solomon*, after he had glutted himself with all the Pleasures so great a Knowledge could invent, and so great a Power could procure, *Quicquid desideraverunt oculi mei, non negavi eis, quin omni voluptate fruerentur*; he experienc'd in all *Vanitatem*, a certain Emptiness, *Afflictionem spiritus*, an Affliction of Mind; because Nothing is good, or according to the innate Appetite of the Soul, but GOD; on the other side, nothing is ill, or contrary to this innate Appetite, but Sin. And hence it was, that those *Pauls*, *Antho-nies*, *Hilaries*, who liv'd on raw Herbs, lay on the hard Ground, spent their Days in Prayer and Mortification, and were depriv'd of all the Delights of Sense, never complain'd of Misery, because having God, and being united to him, they seem'd to want nothing; whereas *Solomon*, tho' abounding with Riches, being without God, seem'd to have nothing. So true it is, that there

is.



is nothing satisfactory to the Rational Soul, but God; and nothing hurtful or grievous to it, but Sin. The Holy Archbishop of Canterbury, *St. Anselm*, protests, That he would rather leap into the eternal Flames of Hell *purus a peccato*, free from Sin, than *peccati labe pollutus calorum regna tenere*, defil'd with Sin to possess Heaven. *St. Augustine* has many things to the same purpose; but none more emphatically describes this Plague than *St. Peter Chrysologus*. 'Tis the nature of Sin, says he, to breathe forth a certain venemous Vapour in the Soul, which so dims the two Lights of Faith and Reason, that it leapes her wholly in Darkness: So that being led by Passion, she throws her self from one Precipice to another, till she comes at length to the very Brink of Hell, and yet sees not all this while, whither she has falln, or how near she is to her eternal Ruine. Besides this, her Fever afflicts her with an insatiable Thirst of all those things which increase her Disease;



ease; and, on the contrary side, Fontibus dulcissimis amara falsedo, it so spoils and vitiates her Taste, that those Fountains of Graces and Spiritual Comforts, the Sacraments, Sermons, Spiritual Books, and the like, which to a Soul in Health are most savory and delicious, to her are as bitter as Gall. To this purpose St. Chrysologus. By which sufficiently appears the deplorable Condition of a Soul in Sin, had we a Sense or Understanding capable of conceiving it. But as the Sickness of the Body is never the less dangerous, because the Patient perceives not the Malignity of his Disease: So the Condition of a Sick Soul is never the less miserable, because in this Lethargy of Flesh and Blood, she discerns not her own Misery. And now, if nothing else will serve the turn, let at least the Danger of an Everlasting Death move us to look after a Cure, and that as earnestly and efficaciously, as the thing deserves. When a wise and skilful

skilful Physician tells his Patient, that  
 he is in Danger of Death, it makes  
 him presently seek a Remedy, attend  
 to the Physician's Prescriptions, and  
 put all diligently in execution. But  
 what is the Death of the Body, com-  
 par'd with the Death of the Soul?  
 That is only Temporal; This, Eternal:  
 That implies a Separation of the Bo-  
 dy from a Rational Soul; This, the  
 Separation of the Soul from the Foun-  
 tain of all Happiness, Almighty God:  
 That leaves the Body, bereav'd indeed  
 of Sense, yet without Pain; This bu-  
 ries the Soul in Hell, there to suffer,  
 and for ever, such Torments, that all  
 the Pains and Torments of this Life  
 are nothing to them. When I some-  
 times consider with my self, that it  
 may be, it is not impossible, that I  
 should one day groan under the hea-  
 vy Burden of Eternal Damnation, tho'  
 I go no farther, reflecting only on a  
 meer Possibility of so great a Misery,  
 it makes my whole Body tremble: My  
 Hair

Hair stands an end, my Heart pants, and my Bones are almost disjointed with Fear. But forasmuch as concerns a Probability thereof, and such a Probability too, that the contrary is improbable, who is there that is not dead already, or quite void of Sense, who can live with such a Thought, under such an Apprehension? And yet certain it is, that those who follow their sensual Inclinations, and scarce ever seriously think of their Souls, are in a Probability, and in a very great Probability of being damn'd. Damn'd! Oh what a Deluge of Misery is included in that little word, *Damn'd*! Let these Considerations, Beloved Christians, sink into our Souls; Let a just Horrour of Sin seize upon our Hearts: And so dispos'd, let us pass to the Second Part, and learn to cure our Souls, by weighing the Circumstances, and considering the Particulars of this young Prince's miraculous Cure.

The Father of our Sick Youth no sooner heard of our Saviour's coming that way, but he presently went unto him. The first thing then, we are to do, is to have recourse to the Physician. *Abiit ad eum*, says the Text, *He departed unto him*; the word *Abiit* here signifying not only a *Going to*, but a *Going from*. Many are willing enough to go to the Heavenly Physician, on condition that they may not go from the World. They will (I say) go to him, but not follow his Advice, in parting with their Riches, Honour, Pleasure, the Source and Origine of their peccant Humour, and consequently the Cause of their Distemper.

The second thing is to Present him with our Petitions: *Et rogabat eum*: *And he ask'd him*. Some come to him, but, like the proud Pharisee, ask him nothing, justifying themselves, and scorning

ing to acknowledge their Wants, or any need they have of a Physician. *Quid rogaverit Deum, quære in verbis ejus, & nihil invenies*: Examine a little (says St. Augustine) the Pharisee's words, and see what he ask'd of God, and you shall find, that he ask'd nothing. This is not the way: But, on the contrary, we must with Humility own our Misery and Sicknes, if ever we expect a Cure. We must *rogare*, beg with an humble Confidence, *ut descendat*, that he will come down to us; at least, that he will be pleas'd to cast down an Eye of Mercy upon our sad and helpless Condition; and then we ought not to doubt of a Remedy from that Hand, which is so far from repelling us when we ask, that its Omnipotent Bounty is always beckning to us, and encouraging us to ask.

The third thing which we ought to do, is of very great moment, and that, for want whereof, many have been eternally

nally lost ; and it is, not only to Go, nor only to Ask, but to do Both in time. 'Tis a dangerous thing to delay the Cure of our Souls. Alas ! how many are there who at this instant fruitlessly deplore in eternal Torments, that ever they put off so important a Concern ? We must then in this imitate the Father of our Sick Youth, who was careful in the beginning. *Incipiebat mori ; His Son began to die ;* and he was solicitous that our Saviour might come, before he had quite given up the Ghost. *Descende, priusquam moriatur Filius meus : Come down* (says he) *before my Son dies.* I am not ignorant, that divers Interpreters, and some Holy Fathers also, accuse these Words of want of Faith, as if an Omnipotence could not as easily have restor'd him Dead to Life, as Sick to Health ; yet they must all grant, that 'tis an excellent Prayer for a dying Soul, *Domine, descende, priusquam moriatur Anima mea ; Lord, vouchsafe to come, before my Soul dies.*

Consider

Consider all the Cures, which our Saviour wrought; and you will still find the appearance of most Difficulty, where the Disease had made the greatest Progress. *Lazarus* was dead, and now four days in his Grave, and how much is to be done to raise him? First, Our Saviour must come in Person, tho' his Disciples dissuade him from exposing himself to so much danger. *The Jews*, said they, *did but just now endeavour to stone thee, and wilt thou again venture thy self amongst them?* He goes notwithstanding this, and being come to the Monument, First commands the Grave-stone to be remov'd, Then he afflicts himself, *turbavit semet-ipsum*, and even weeps, *lacrimatus est JESUS*: Then he prays to his Eternal Father; and at last *voce magnâ clamavit*, he cries out with a loud voice, *Lazare, veni foras; Lazarus, come forth.* What was all this for? Would not a *Lazarus vivit, Lazarus lives*, have done the.



the Business, tho' our Blessed Saviour had been as far distant from *Lazarus*, as he was now from our Sick Prince? It were a Blasphemy to affirm the contrary. But *Lazarus*, Dear Christians, was the Type of an inveterate and hardned Sinner; and our Blessed Saviour on this occasion was not so careful to let us see the Uncontrollable-ness of his Omnipotence, as he was to shew us, how much it goes to his Heart, that a Sinner should delay his Conversion, till he becomes buried in ill Habits, and is kept under Ground by the weighty Grave-stone of his own Obstinacy; and withal, how difficult it is, that such an one should be again restor'd to the Life of Grace.

The Widows Son was not yet bury'd, but only carry'd out to Burial: *Efferebatur filius unicus Matris suæ.* And consequently our Saviour raises him with a far less appearance of difficulty: He comes, but neither afflicts himself,



himself, nor weeps; he only touches the Bier, and commands the dead Youth to rise; *Adolescens, tibi dico, Surge:* and his Commands were presently obey'd; for the dead Youth arose, *Resedit, qui erat mortuus.*

The Daughter of the Prince of the Synagogue was but newly dead, neither buried, nor carry'd out to Burial. Our Saviour comes, and without speaking to her, took her by the Hand, and rais'd her; *Tenuit manum ejus, & surrexit Puella.*

But our young Prince was not so much as dead, but only *incipiebat mori*, he began to die, and so deserv'd the easiest Cure of all; for our Saviour neither comes in Person, nor commands his Disease; but only tells his Father, *Filius tuus vivit, Thy Son is well*, and at that very hour *reliquit eum Febris*, his Fever left him. By all which our Saviour would teach us, how willing

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ling he is to hear a Sinners Petition, when it is presented to him in time; and how unwillingly he hearkens to those, who put off all to the last Point. Daily Experience teaches us this Lesson, there scarce being a Country which do's not afford us most terrible Histories of those, who, delaying from time to time the Amendment of their Lives, have felt the heavy Hand of God's Judgment, being taken at unawares out of this Life, and in a moment they least suspected, swallow'd up, and bury'd in Hell: *Memento descendunt in Infernum.*

It is true, we have a good God, a merciful God, a patient God, who expects day after day the Conversion of a Sinner; but we must know, that a certain Period is pitch'd upon, and decreed from all Eternity, that will wholly stop the Current of Mercy, and open a way to Justice: for tho, as long as any Sinner lives in this Life

Life with the use of Reason, Almighty God never denies him his sufficient Grace; yet after such a determinate Period, he either takes him out of this Life, or permits him to fall into such Blindness and Hardness of Heart, that he never will recover, tho' he always may: *Sic enim* (says St. Augustine) *excæcat, sic obdurat Deus, deserendo, & non adjuvando, quod occulto judicio facere potest, iniquo non potest*: God do's so blind and so harden a Sinner, by forsaking him, and withdrawing his Help from him, as that his Judgment indeed is secret and hidden, but never unjust. For, *Hoc eorum voluntatem meruisse* Respondeo: I answer (says the same Saint) to those who complain hereof, *Thā* this is what they themselves (*viz.* by their own perverse Will) have deserv'd. Poor Samuel, with Eyes and Heart lifted up to Heaven, pray'd for Saul; but it was too late: *Why do you ask me for him,* (says Almighty God) *when abjeci eum,*  
D I have

*I have cast him off?* Remember the two first Chapters of the Prophet *Amos*, where our Lord speaks thus to seven different Countries, *viz. Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab*, and at last even to his Elect People *Juda* and *Israel: Super tribus Sceleribus*; for three heinous Crimes, Patience: but *super quatuor non convertam*, to the fourth no Mercy. Who knows, but this very Moment may be the last Period and Admonition, the last Grace which Almighty God hath decreed for some one or more of us here present, in such manner, that, if it be neglected, we shall perish irrecoverably for all Eternity? *Super quatuor non convertam*. No, the Period is come, *Mittam ignem*, and nothing now remains, excepting only the dreadful Torments of an unquenchable Fire.

O let us then, every one of us, enter into our own Souls, and make an exact

exact Scrutiny into their present State and Condition. Let us examine whether Terrene and Sensual Pleasures have not cast them into the Pestilent Fever of a violent Passion, so that *incipiunt mori*, they begin to die, to die (I say) to God and Heaven. If so, let us forthwith have recourse to the Physician; *Abeamus ad eum*; let us go from all other Entertainments and Concerns unto him: *Rogemus*, let us throw our selves at the Sacred Feet of our Crucified Lord, acknowledge our Misery, and beg his Assistance: *Domine, descende, priusquam moriatur Anima mea*; O Lord, vouchsafe to come down to me, before my Soul be dead. O my Lord, my God, who didst esteem Sin to be so great an Evil, that thou thoughtst it worth thy Labour to come down from Heaven to Earth, to agonize and die upon a Cross, that thou mightst free us from it; For what didst thou open Five Divine Fountains of thy Sacred Blood, save only to cleanse

us from so foul a Stain? Ah! shew us now, that *non est abbreviata Manus Domini*, that thy Mercy hath as great a reach as ever. Pardon us what is past, assuage the violence of our present Passion with one drop of thy most precious Blood, and preserve us from all Sin for the future. *Descende*, look down into our Souls, and behold, how we all endeavour to cancel our Offences by an Act of perfect Contrition, being sorry from the bottom of our Hearts for having ever displeas'd so good a God, and this meerly for the Love of thy infinitely amiable Person: And for the same Motive we purpose to suffer whatever can be suffer'd, rather than hereafter to offend thee in the least. Methinks, Beloved Christians, methinks I am sensible, that the Bowels of Divine Mercy are already mov'd towards us; and I doubt not, but every Soul, that is seriously converted, feels a Pledge of Almighty God's Mercy, by perceiving  
within

within her self a more perfect Union with him, who is her Life, and by hearing from him after a peculiar manner, *Anima tua vivit, Thy Soul lives*, thy Soul is recover'd from her Distemper. *Which Happiness, through the Intercession of the Virgin Mother, God of his infinite Mercy grant us all. Amen.*

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F I N I S.

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